

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE****5    APPARATUS, SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR AUTOMATICALLY MAKING  
OPERATIONAL PURCHASING DECISIONS**

5                    An apparatus, system and method for automatically making operation  
purchasing decisions are provided. The apparatus, system and method make use of  
10   purchasing policy rules established by human operators associated with a firm to  
guide the making of decisions to purchase products and/or services. The actual  
decisions to purchase are made automatically by the system without requiring human  
intervention. The decisions to purchase are made by evaluating the possible vendors  
to identify a set of vendors from which the product or service may be obtained. From  
15   this set of vendors, one or more vendors are selected from which to purchase the  
desired product or service. The selection of these one or more vendors may be based  
on the established rules, information obtained about each vendor, and the results of  
negotiation with the vendors. Because the actual decisions are performed  
automatically without human intervention, the decisions may be made much more  
20   quickly than would have been done by a human being.